

Testimony
Lisa Thomas, Town Council Chair
Town of Coventry

RE: HB-6659, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

HUMAN SERVICES – MEDICAID – EMS REIMBURSEMENT RATE

Like many smaller towns, Coventry is experiencing a crisis in providing EMS service to our residents. We need the State to contribute a fair share for Medicaid expenses to keep our service alive. Last year the Town rejected increases in property taxes to cover the cost and we resort to using ARPA funds as a bandage. As you are aware these funds will no longer be available.

Covid accelerated the ambulance system change with increased demand for 24/7 service, a rapid decline in volunteerism, increased volume (which continues to climb) and skyrocketing expenses. At the local level we have tried many things to address costs and manpower shortages and feel we bleeding out and a bandage will no longer cover the wound. We have tried all local solutions and need help from the State in sharing the expense to serve our citizens or our ambulance service will not be available to provide timely service. This will endanger lives of Connecticut citizens.

We recognize that this is a multi-faceted issue that involves a comprehensive, long-term solution. However, increasing the state Medicaid reimbursement rate to match the federal Medicare rate is one solution that lawmakers can act on this year, which would provide towns with immediate relief from escalating costs and ensure that we can continue to provide resident with much-needed emergency medical service.

It is our understanding that the federal Government may actually cover some of the state funding needed to increase the reimbursement rate and it would be a shame to leave those dollars on the table instead of using them to eliminate some of the pressure on property taxes caused by increasing EMS services costs. Once again CT is leaving Federal funds on the table and in this case expect property taxes to cover the short fall.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of increasing the Medicaid reimbursement rate.